

Archaic Terracotta Art from Sanchankot

D.P. Tewari & Anushka Ojha

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The mound of Sanchankot (Lat 26° 59'10" North and long 80° 19'150" East), lies in revenue village Ramkot which is a part of Behata Mujawar Gram Panchayat of tehsil Safipur of district Unnao. It is well connected with road from Lucknow via Sandila (65 km) and Bangarmau (16.4 km). It is about 55 km north west of district headquarters of Unnao. The ancient site of Pariyar is about 47 km south and south west, Kannauj 54 km west north west, Naimisaranya 53 km north east as crow flies from the mound.

The extensive mound of Ramkot is extended in 1.5 km east west and 550 meters north south. It is 12.50 meter high from the surrounding ground level. River Sai (ancient Syandika) flows in north and west of the mound.



Fig. 1, General view of Jalesar Mound, Before excavations

There are remains of a mound in Behata on Sandila-Bangarmau road at a distance of 2 km from Ramkot which is known as Jalesar ka Tila locally (Fig.1). The Department of Ancient Indian History and Archaeology, Lucknow University, under the direction of first author of this paper excavated this mound in 3 field seasons from 2007-8 to 2009-10. A cluster of 3 brick temples of Kushana period and an apsidal temple of Shunga period was unearthed at the site (Fig. 2). It is notable here that a hoard of archaic terracotta figurines was recovered from this mound amounting

- Fellow Indian Institute of Advance Study, Shimla
- Assistant Professor : Devnarayan Girls P.G. College, Bayana, Rajasthan

17000. These figurines were tiny in size and were made with hands. Their hands and legs are small and stumpy. Sometimes fingers of hands and legs are demarcated by incised lines. They have pinched nose, punched eyes and split mouth. Other body parts are also made by hand in some of the specimens. The representative specimens show an evolution in the making of archaic figurines.



Fig. 2, Temple complex, Jalesar, after excavations

Plate:1

1. This specimen shows a primitive attempt to make the figure by hand by pressing clay to give it a human shape. The clay was a bit wet and its head tilted towards right. The artist could not make other parts of the body except head, hands, and leg.
 2. As above but the head is tilted to the left due to wet clay.
 3. It seems that the artist is trying to make the figurine in a sitting posture.
 4. This specimen shows that artist tried to make the nose by pressing the clay and nasal hole by pinching in the clay.
 5. Attempt has been made to represent mouth by splitting the clay by a sharp instrument.
 6. Attempt has been made to show fingers in hands and legs, but the number of fingers is not correct. The naval is also represented by pressing clay inside.
 7. The balance of pressing clay for preparing naval was not proper and it became a large depressed mark on the stomach.
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8. Now the naval is made properly, but a little upwards on the stomach.
9. For demarcating sex, they shown breast in the figure.

Plate:2

10. Further the sculpture made bun of hair of the head elongated to the back of head.
11. Some time bun is represented tilting towards left of the head.
12. Normally featureless archaic figurines were made commonly and these are found in a massive scale from the site.
- 13-15. For the sex determination of in male figurine, the sculpture projected phallus in their body. Sometimes it is fused and sometime prominent.
16. The sculpture wanted to decorate these figurines and represented an ornament in the waist by incised lines.



Plate:1, Archaic terracotta figurines, Jalesar, Sanchankot

17. In the same way a torque was represented on neck.
18. Multiple horizontal incised lines are executed on the figure for the decoration purposes.

Plate:3

19. In the case of female figurines, sometimes bindi has been put on their forehead by an incised dot.
20. Their hair are shown departed in three parts.
21. The sculpture has tried his best to represent the lower garment with a design by vertical / oblique incised lines.



Plate:2, Archaic terracotta figurines, Jalesar, Sanchankot



Plate:3, Archaic terracotta figurines, Jalesar, Sanchankot

Although the terracotta figurines are considered dateless and these are found in excavations from different cultural horizon, but the archaic figurines from Sanchankot in question are related to Kushana period. There are other terracotta figurines of male and female which are crude as well as finished but the archaic terracotta human figurines are mostly primitive. Here at Sanchankot, in making of archaic terracotta figurines an evolution is seen. The sculpture of these archaic figurines is making an attempt to make the perfect with all organs and decorate them too.
